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Terracottas from the Cyclades

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- ¹ In the past several decades, archaeological research on the Cycladic islands has not only restored several sites investigated earlier, but has also brought to light sanctuaries on Despotiko, Kythnos, and Aguios Andreas on Siphnos, which are not mentioned in any literary sources. To these new discoveries can be added over a century's worth of work on Delos, the principal cult site in the Cyclades. The availability of all this material has created a wonderful opportunity to explore the political, social, and religious aspects of Cycladic societies, subjects that thus far have received relatively little scholarly attention¹. My research, which consists of a systematic study of the cults practiced in the Cyclades, has three principal objectives: a presentation of the topography, an analysis of the material, and a comparative study of cults practiced in the Cyclades and on Delos. To achieve this end, it relies on a variety of sources: literature, epigraphy, and coins, as well as on recently uncovered archaeological remains. Among the last mentioned are a plethora of coroplastic items. Of these I analyze certain more singular items, setting them into the broader archaeological context of the Cycladic sanctuaries in which they were discovered, in order to define more fully the character of the cult. Of particular interest are some remarkable objects found in a deposit dating to the Archaic period at the sanctuary on Despotiko and at the Delion on Paros. I am currently studying perfume vases in the shape of male genitalia as well as mold-crafted roosters and their symbolism. Since I am working on the iconography of Artemis in the Archaic Cyclades, I am particularly interested in the large, decoratively painted clay statue of fine ceramic discovered at the sanctuary of Despotiko², a unique item that may be an early representation of Artemis and possibly the sanctuary's cult statue. Similar clay statues have been uncovered on Sifnos³, but in these cases the detailed decorative motives painted on them may reveal associations between Artemis and Potnia, a hypostasis identifiable in other situations at Cycladic sanctuaries⁴. Approaching the Delion in Paros through a study of its votives, which include several coroplastic items (e.g. protomes, molded body parts, female heads) I am determining the function of this sanctuary, which worked simultaneously as a local sanctuary for the joint cult of Apollo and Artemis and as a branch sanctuary of Delos.

Fig. 1–Daedalic figurine (675–650 BCE) found in room A1, Despotico



Photo: Yannis Kourayos

Fig. 2–Figurines and ceramics (7th century-first half of 6th century BCE) from the votive deposit found on room A1

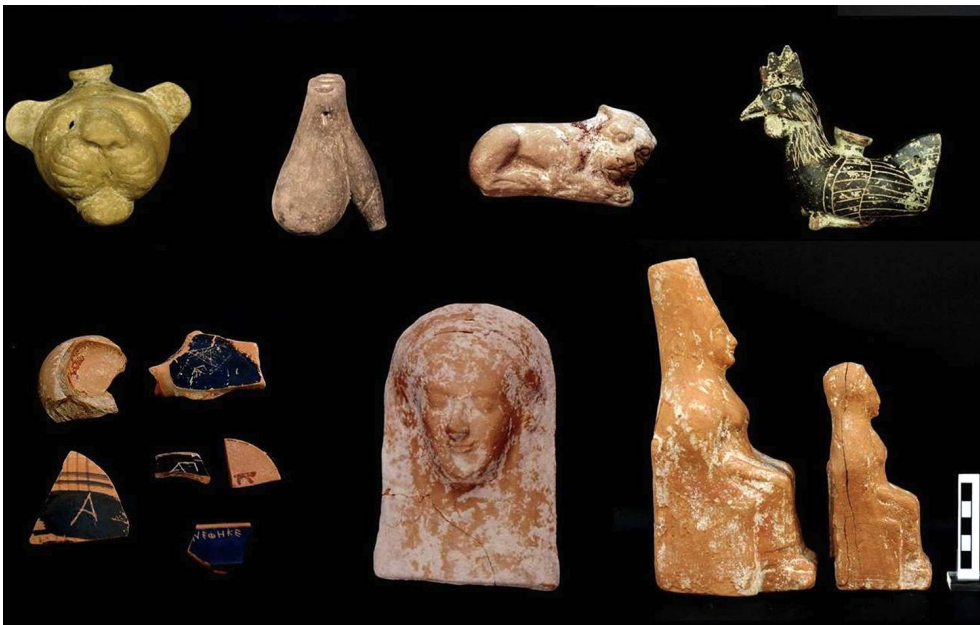


Photo: Yannis Kourayos

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NOTES

1. Bonnin-Quéré-2014; Bruneau 1970; Bruneau and Ducat 2005; Constantakopoulou 2010; Jockey 1996; Savo 2004; Scott 2013; Mazarakis-Ainian 2012-2013.
 2. Kourayos 2005; Kourayos 2012.
 3. Brock and Mackworth-Young 1949.
 4. Korou 2005.
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